

Briefing: Colorado State University Extension (CSUE) in Jefferson County to close the on-site Plant Diagnostic Laboratory in January 2023 to align with Colorado State University's (CSU) state diagnostic processes. CSUE Jefferson County's Horticulture team will continue operating as do CSUE offices in other counties, by performing sample intake and diagnostic assessments for Jeffco residents. Business samples should be submitted directly to the CSU Spur Plant Diagnostic Clinic in Denver.

Overview of Changes:

In 2022, the CSU Campus Plant Diagnostic Clinic moved from Fort Collins to the new CSU Spur campus in Denver. The Jeffco Extension office will now align with CSUE offices across the state in its methods for plant diagnostics by closing its satellite lab in January 2023. The Spur Plant Diagnostic Clinic is here to serve the entire metro area and state, with state-of-the-art equipment and methods. Along with numerous CSU Extension staff, the Spur staff have been actively involved in establishing a state-wide model for diagnostic sample processing at Extension offices. The time has come for the Jeffco Extension office to align with the state-wide model and to close the Jeffco Lab indefinitely. Jeffco Horticulture staff will continue operating as do CSUE offices in other counties, by performing sample intake and diagnostic assessments for local residents. However, any samples requiring further diagnosis and laboratory work will now be sent to CSU Spur, instead of occurring in-house. Business samples should be submitted directly to the CSU Spur Plant Diagnostic Clinic in Denver. The Jefferson County laboratory space is being retained for now and is under consideration for teaching space for Advanced Colorado Master Gardeners, among other uses.

History:

The Jefferson County Extension Plant Diagnostic Clinic and Laboratory (Jeffco Clinic) was established in 1986, by plant pathologist Dr. Bill Brown, who served as the director of the Colorado State University Campus Plant Identification and Diagnostic Clinic at the time. The Jeffco Clinic was one of three regional/satellite diagnostic clinics, each with individual areas of expertise, that operated under the umbrella of the CSU Plant Identification and Diagnostic Clinic on campus.

- The Jeffco Clinic, located in Golden, served the greater Denver metro area focusing on landscape plant pathology and golf course turf for both private homeowners and commercial green industry professionals.
- The Regional Extension Program for Commercial Greenhouses & Nurseries was located in Adams County, Brighton, CO, and served commercial greenhouse owners, managers and employees in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Jefferson, Morgan and Weld Counties.
- The Diagnostic Lab in Grand Junction, CO (Mesa County) consisted of two components that served the Western Slope: The Horticulture and Plant Pathology Lab, and the Entomology Lab.

In 2002, all four Clinics became part of the NPND (National Plant Diagnostic Network), which was established by USDA - NIFA (National Institute of Food and Agriculture) and the Office of Homeland Security to enhance agricultural biosecurity by detecting instances of biological attacks. By 2015, the Adams County and Mesa County Clinics had closed, leaving the main Clinic on campus, and the satellite Clinic in Jefferson County to serve the diagnostic needs across the state.

Since 1986, the Jeffco Clinic has continued to evolve to serve the needs of its clients under the guidance of diagnostic staff. From the charter diagnostician, Cindy Rassmussen Dykes, to Laura Pottorff (Jefferson and Adams counties), to more recent CSUE professionals like Robert Cox, Mary Small, Curtis Utley and Mari Hackbarth, they have applied diagnostic best practices and methods to diagnose plant problems, identify insects and plants, and make management recommendations. Over the years, the staff has relied on a strong team of Colorado Master Gardener volunteers with specialized training in plant problem diagnosis to extend our reach. The Jefferson County lab is equipped with microscopes and other diagnostic tools for fungal and bacterial culture, some virus testing and pine wilt nematode detection. Over nearly four decades, the Jefferson County clinic has served thousands of homeowners, landscape maintenance/consultants, landscape contractors/architects, turfgrass (lawn, golf course, sod growers), Arborists and nurseries, vegetable and herb growers, and garden centers. Clients utilizing the CSUE's expertise have come from Jefferson County, the larger Denver metro area, and from Extension offices and landscape professionals across the state. Each client has presented the clinic with an opportunity to provide educational outreach, sharing research-based information, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) solutions that minimize the use of unnecessary pesticides. During COVID, sample numbers dropped by about half (from 500 to 250) but have been on the increase again for the past two years, with 2022 closing out at 296.

CSUE welcomes the partnership of Spur's Plant Diagnostic clinic that will continue offering advanced diagnostics to Colorado, while the local CSUE Jefferson County office will continue education and community engagement by sample intake and diagnostic assessments for Jeffco residents.